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Abenaki Wakefield and Canada Subsequent to the
Durham Mission, 1839-42.

BY

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GIBBON WAKEFIELD AND CANADA SUBSEQUENT TO THE DURHAM MISSION, 1839-1842

THE part played by Edward Gibbon Wakefield in the Durham Mission and the Durham Report has been recognized ever since 1838, but his intimate connection with Canadian affairs during the next few years has not yet been clearly understood. We have known that he revisited Canada twice, and that he was the "secret adviser", as the Dictionary of National Biography puts it, of Sir Charles Metcalfe in his battle with the legislature; that he wrote a most moving estimate of the good governor's character and a rather disingenuous account of the crisis. But what he was doing in Canada, how he came to be in close touch with Metcalfe, and—most puzzling of all—how he was found engaging in what was actually, all plausible explanations notwithstanding, a struggle against that responsible government which the Report had advocated, we have not known. The only life as yet written (R. Garnett, 1912) merely remarks that these points have never been cleared up. Material has, however, been found which makes it possible now to trace his movements during those years not exactly accurately, but at least intelligently.

It is impossible within the compass of one article of reasonable length to deal with all the material, and so I propose here to confine myself to the period which ends with October, 1842, and which therefore includes the weeks that saw the formation of the first Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry. The whole Conservative press of Canada accused Wakefield with much virulence of having made that ministry; at the moment he and his friends were silent, but after a year or two they also asserted his influence, though in general terms and without offering proof. The interesting task confronting the student of history is to decide whether these claims were true or false, and to it we must know something of Wakefield's position in Canada, his interests, and his connections, and we shall have to give a good deal of space to a preliminary investigation of these points.

On October 20th, 1838, Wakefield left Canada for England, preceding Durham by twelve days. The date of his departure was doubtless determined by dates of sailing from New York, since he could not return with his chief on the *Inconstant*, but it enabled him to prepare the way for the arrival of the late High Commissioner, and also to set promptly about another piece of business which must have been planned in Canada.

Here and there in Lord Durham's Report* are hints that the writers favoured "speculation" in wild lands, construction of public works by private loan, the establishment of new banks. It seems to have occurred to Buller, Wakefield, Durham, and possibly Edward Ellice, Jr., who were all colonial theorists† as well as personal friends, that it might be possible to form one Company which should engage in all these activities, a land company which should lend money to the state for public improvements and also carry on banking operations, and that they might themselves organize it and foster the project. So at least one judges from Wakefield's movements.

Three years before this, on September 9th, 1835, a company known as the North American Colonial Association of Ireland had been incorporated by Act of Parliament for the purpose, as the preamble of the act sets forth, "of providing suitable means for the conveyance of emigrants to His Majesty's said North American possessions, and furnishing to such emigrants all suitable accommodation, implements, and necessities for their immediate settlement and the due cultivation of the land which such persons may acquire . . . , and with power to use its capital "in purchasing, building, equipping, fitting up, hiring, and chartering, ships and other vessels for the purpose of carrying and transporting persons willing and desirous to emigrate to His Majesty's provinces and colonies in North America and their dependencies, *and also to receive money and other deposits of emigrant settlers and other persons, . . . and also to make loans and advances of money, notes,*

*e.g. (a) Report of the Assistant Commissioners of Municipal Inquiry. Vol. III, p. . . , Lucas Edition.

(b) Main Report, Vol. II, p. 48, Lucas Edition.

†They were all engaged at that moment in the undertakings of the New Zealand Association.

or bills of exchange to emigrant settlers and others resident within His Majesty's said provinces . . ."* It was one of many such companies formed at this period of national distress, and like many others had not succeeded in getting enough paid-up capital to attempt any operations worth while. But its charter conferred the powers needed by the Durhamites. Wakefield promptly seized upon the derelict body, and proceeded to put life into it. His old associates in the South Australian and New Zealand enterprises lent their assistance. A controlling interest was quickly acquired. An agent, a solicitor named Pearson, was sent through Ireland in January, 1839, to sell stock, apparently with some success, but already in the closing weeks of 1838 enough capital had been guaranteed to make action safe. Before the year closed Colonel Kingscote, the governor of the reorganized company, bought from Edward Ellice the seigneury of Beauharnois. There was a thin pretence that the purchase was a personal one, but nobody was deceived. The facts are contained in a letter written by Ellice to the *Times* of March 8th, 1843, in reply to a hostile leader which had appeared in the issue of the 7th. "I did not sell my property in Canada to the association. I had no thought or intention of selling it, and never offered it for sale. Lord Durham, after his return from Canada, wrote to ask whether I would entertain proposals from parties desirous of purchasing it. On receiving my answer in the affirmative, he referred me to Mr. Wakefield through whose agency it was sold, in 1838, to Mr. Kingscote." On August 7th, 1839, he goes on to say, Kingscote with his consent transferred the land and the responsibility for payments to the North American Colonial Association of Ireland.

Thus far no time had been lost. But now ensued a period of suspense and inactivity. The second rebellion had broken out in Canada. Beauharnois had been attacked in the rebellion, Edward Ellice and his wife, who had lingered on the seigneury after Durham's departure, made prisoners, and the whole countryside burnt and laid waste. It was no moment for colonizing or digging canals, and the moment for such work would not come until something had been done to heal the divisions of the country, a consummation which as yet

*The italics are not in the original.

seemed remote enough. Canada merely marked time while waiting for her new governor, whose appointment was delayed.

Meanwhile the game was played in London. All through January the Durhamites must have been busy on the Report. On February 5th, had they but known it, Lord John Russell threatened to resign from the Cabinet unless Lord Glenelg left the Colonial Office. On February 8th Wakefield, fearing that the report would be quietly pigeon-holed somewhere, got a large part of it printed in the *Times*. Immediately thereupon began an agitation which the *Spectator* early in March described thus: "... all sorts of intrigues are on foot to counteract the influence of Lord Durham's disclosures. Colonial officials, absent from their posts (he is thinking of Haliburton and John Beverley Robinson), are writing in the newspapers in defence of the 'Family Compact' of Upper Canada. Some of the Canada lumbermen in the City, pretending to represent the colony, but really trembling for their monopoly, which is of no value to those who deserve the name of colonists, are very busy in framing bills and resolutions, and pestering Members of both Houses with their narrow-minded importunity. A certain clique of Tories, with the aid of absentee Colonial officials, are also said to be preparing a scheme of settlement to be brought forward in case of need against that of the Ministers." The Legislature of Upper Canada voted Sir Allan MacNab, J. B. Robinson, and W. H. Merritt £3000 in order that they might go home and "malign Lord Durham," as the *Examiner* complains on April 10th. For some months, therefore, the principal object of all the Durhamites was to persuade or force the Government to carry out the main recommendations of the Report, and we can trace their activity most clearly in the paper they founded for the time.

On December 1st, 1838, about a month, that is to say, after Wakefield's return, appeared the first number of the *Colonial Gazette*, a weekly paper founded ostensibly as the organ of the London Colonial Society. Proof is not as yet available, though the circumstantial evidence is strong, to show that the paper was even at the very beginning established by the Durhamites, who hoped to use it for their own purposes under cover of the name of the Colonial Society.

But in any case it soon became theirs both in name and in fact. After running along for eight months as a colourless vehicle for colonial news, it came to a sudden break. The number for August 3rd, 1839, announces that in consequence of disagreements into which it is not necessary to enter the *Colonial Gazette* will henceforth be published at the office of the *Spectator* and will have no further connection with the Colonial Society. The announcement was tantamount to a notice that in future the paper was to be Wakefield's own, for the *Spectator* and its editor, Robert Rintoul, had been his powerful and unfailing allies ever since 1830, when he had no other friend; or, if any further evidence be required, it may be found in the new tone which henceforward distinguishes the publication. It becomes anything but colourless. It is marked by the ardour with which it advocates its views, and at the same time by the wide and intelligent surveys on which it founds them. In this combination of breadth and clarity and warmth its main articles are such as only Wakefield could write. Undoubtedly he had broken with the London Colonial Society because it had refused to let him use its columns for the political purposes he had planned. The paper becomes his own organ, and during the next four years it is the most trustworthy index of his mind.

To the *Colonial Gazette*, then, we turn to see what he was doing and thinking during that confused pause that preceded the appointment of Poulett Thomson. All through the first seven months we get but one hint, a bare announcement on July 13th that "a deputation from the North American Colonial Association of Ireland (here follow the names) had an interview with the Marquis of Normanby, yesterday, at the Colonial Office." But as soon as he gets things into his own hands he keeps the Association out of view and begins to hammer tirelessly on the need for action in the Canadian matter. It must be remembered that the Government had just prolonged for three years the suspension of the Canadian constitution, thereby, as it seemed at the time, furnishing a fresh example of the policy of drift. Wakefield demanded week by week a definite policy and some immediate action. The paper of September 4, 1839, announced that Lord John Russell had gone to the Colonial Office, and that he was "reported" to have

offered the Under Secretaryship in vain both to Henry George Ward and to Charles Buller. If he had really done so (and unless it was pure bluff the "report" was certainly truth, for Wakefield could not have been misinformed on a matter touching Buller) Lord John was giving a strong guarantee of his intentions in regard to Canada.

The *Colonial Gazette* did not accept him heartily, however. Some say (to summarize its leading article) that he has taken the office for the sole purpose of settling the business in the right way. If so, well. Yes, but some say that as usual the Government is thinking anybody good enough for the colonies; Lord John knows nothing about them, but wants an easy berth after working hard as Home Secretary. If so, let him look to it. The *Colonial Gazette* is all the more doubtful of his good intentions, because the very same number has to announce the appointment of Poulett Thomson, and as to Thomson—and then the article lapses into unrestrained and bitter mirth on the subject of his ineptitude, his lack of personal dignity, his weakness, etc. It is so unrestrained that one wonders if it were not written with calculation to try to alarm Thomson into making terms with such formidable opponents. By the next week, at any rate, something has happened. The *Colonial Gazette* for September 18th announces that Mr. Thomson has had several interviews with Lord Durham, and proceeds, with that clarity and spaciousness which distinguish all Wakefield's writing, to explain exactly what his policy in Canada is to be. Put briefly, it is: to go quickly and decisively to work; to bring about a Union, making use of Mr. James Stewart in Lower Canada; to organize municipal institutions; to come to some settlement in the matter of the Clergy Reserves; and to give (so says the article) "practical Responsible Government." Wakefield goes on to say that he can if necessary produce legal proof that this policy has actually been declared. He exults openly in the fact that the *Colonial Gazette* will travel by steamer, and will reach Canada long before the governor on his man-of-war. Canadians will be armed by its information, and will hold the governor to his declared policy even although he may have been trying to play a double game. It is a repetition of the tactics which forced the hand of the Government by sending

Lord Durham's Report to the *Times*. We shall see the same tactics employed a third time, at a moment critical for Canada. At present, however, he was probably wasting his thunder, since there is no reason to doubt that from the first Lord John really did mean business.

The remainder of 1839 is filled with Buller's famous articles on Responsible Government, and the early part of 1840 with broad and statesmanlike comments on the measures Poulett Thomson was carrying out in Canada. Except in the single case of the Colonial Office and the arch enemy Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Stephen—"King Stephen", the *Spectator* pleasantly calls him—who never could do right, it was not Wakefield's way to indulge in petty criticism. Seeing that Thomson means "to finish what Durham began" he gives him consistent support, although he often disagrees as to details. Here are two samples of his articles at this time:

"We fully expect, therefore, that Governor Thomson's measure (his Clergy Reserves Bill) will be disallowed (by the Lords). If it should so fall out, there will be little cause for regret. For those must be ignorant indeed of the state of feeling in Canada on this subject, who imagine that the colonists, who objected to one established church, would be content with two. Whatever may happen here, the question is as little *settled* as ever. Perhaps the best thing that could happen here would be such a decision of the specific measure as should soonest compel Parliament to place the whole subject in the hands of the Colonial Legislature. To that it must come at last, sooner or later, and the sooner the better."—March 4th.

"The distinction of Upper and Lower Canada may be deemed at an end; and we must henceforth look at Canada as one great colony, relieved by British preponderance in the Local Legislature from the miserable contest of races, and strong enough to manage its own affairs in its own way. . . . It is this general view of the benefits promised by the Canada Union which has made us unwilling even to notice defects and errors in Lord John Russell's measure that have not escaped condemnation in the colony. The bill provides the means of hereafter correcting what is objectionable in it; and is not that enough? . . . Let them (the colonists) be content for the present with a great and unquestionable good; the first Parlia-

ment of United Canada will easily secure the rest." . . .—June 3rd.

But now, with the Union a fact, and the Canadian political future so hopeful, the North American Colonial Association of Ireland begins to prepare for operations. The article from which I have just quoted goes on smoothly:

"Meanwhile it is satisfactory to observe that the prospect of the Union has already been productive of advantage to Canada. We have just received a pamphlet published by Smith and Elder for "the North American Colonial Association of Ireland," from which it appears that this prospect of the Union has induced a powerful Company to determine on carrying into effect an important plan of colonization in Canada. The Directors say in their prospectus—

'The unsettled state of affairs in Canada has hitherto prevented the Company from exerting itself for the purposes of the Act. *But as the bill for the union of the Canadas and the settlement of their government has passed through Committee in the House of Commons,** the Directors are of the opinion that the time has now come for exercising the extensive powers bestowed on this Company, with profit to the shareholders, with advantage to those who may emigrate under the auspices of the Company, and with very great benefit to the existing population of the Colonies . . . Political tranquillity being restored *by the union of the two Canadas*, this Company may thus become the means of supplying the Colonies with people and capital from the Mother Country, where both are equally superabundant.'

"The spot selected for this new enterprise in colonization is the county of Beauharnois, near Montreal; and the plan proposes the investment of a large amount of capital in effecting public works there, in banking, and in promoting emigration to the Company's territory, which is offered for sale in this country on 'terms and conditions' similar to those which collected bodies of settlers for South Australia and New Zealand. The Directors, so far as the peculiar circumstances of the case permit, adopt the principle of colonizing which has proved so successful in other parts of the world. . .

"But this is not a mere imitation of the colonizing plan

*These italics, and those immediately following, are Wakefield's.

of the founders of Adelaide in South Australia and Wellington in New Zealand, servilely adopted by persons not familiar with its principles and operation. The very men who have accomplished so much elsewhere engage in Canadian colonization. Among the list of Directors we find Lord Durham the Governor, and Mr. Somes the Deputy-Governor, of the New Zealand Company, and the principal founders of South Australia, such as Mr. Wakefield, Mr. Hutt, Mr. Angas, Mr. Kingscote, and Alderman Pirie; while such names as those of Mr. Andrew Colville, Mr. Simpson, the Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Mr. Edward Chapman, Mr. Russell Ellice, and Mr. Auldjo, are a guarantee of familiar knowledge with respect to Canada."

This pamphlet published by Smith and Elder has not as yet been discovered, so that in the meantime we must remain ignorant of the precise terms on which the Association proposed to sell its land. They were probably very similar to those offered by the Canada Company.

The pamphlet and the article in the *Colonial Gazette* were for public consumption. But the North American Colonial Association of Ireland had some necessary business to transact privately with the Colonial Office and the Governor-General of Canada. The negotiations were conducted, like so many others in which Wakefield played a part, almost entirely by private interview, a fact which makes their progress very difficult to trace. Yet it has proved possible to form a fairly clear idea of what was going on.

The crying need of Canada was of course for public works to improve communications, the construction of which would at the same time provide occupation for poor immigrants. With a happy blend of concern for the public weal and regard for its own, the Association proposed to lend to the Canadian Government the money needed to link the Lachine Canal with the rest of the St. Lawrence system, on condition that the new canal ran through its own property of Beauharnois. The land revenue was to be pledged as security for the loan, and this condition obviously threatened the whole scheme, since at present the land revenue was part of the consolidated fund of Canada, and as such was pledged already to existing debts.

The campaign was opened with extreme caution. The

Colonial Office must have been approached in the latter part of 1840, for on January 26th, 1841, we find Lord Sydenham replying to a question of Lord John Russell's, "In respect to the North American Colonial Association of Ireland, I can only say that their operations have been very much kept out of view in this country, but as far as they are known, I should be very sorry to see the Government in any way connected with them. If the shareholders were to be the only sufferers, it would be of little moment, but I anticipate serious consequences whenever the unfortunate persons who may have made purchases of land of this company shall arrive to take possession of their property, if it has been acquired on the terms set forth in the prospectus." Early in 1841 joint meetings of the Directors of the Canada Company, the British American Land Company, and the North American Colonial Association of Ireland, were held in London, instigated by Wakefield, so his detractors alleged with probable truth, although he did not attend them and the ostensible agent was John Abel Smith, a Director of the North American Colonial Association. At these meetings the companies debated in common the urgent need of Canadian public works, and the difficulties of Canadian finance. The Canadian Emigration Agent, Dr. Rolph, was approached and won over; so was the North American Committee of the London Colonial Society; and two separate memorials, one from this committee, the other from the three land companies, were presented to Lord John Russell, and in due time found their way across the Atlantic to Lord Sydenham, to whom Rolph also sent a long letter. The first memorial and Rolph's letter were pompous and pithless effusions which need not detain us; the second memorial drawn up by Wakefield (again, according to his enemies, for his friends are silent as to its authorship) was a very different affair. Briefly, it urged that not merely the revenue from Crown Lands, but the actual lands and timber, should be turned over to the Canadian Legislature to dispose of at its own pleasure.* It went on,

"That your Memorialists entertain a confident belief that

*Appendix B to Lord Durham's Report had recommended complete central control as the best course, but, failing that, complete colonial control. Lucas Edition, Vol. III, pp. 39-40.

if the Crown should adopt this beneficent course the new Legislature of Canada, impelled by an anxious desire, in which every British settler in the colony participates, to set on foot improvements similar to those which have been executed with so much advantage in the State of New York, and to restore the stream of British emigration to its ancient Canadian channel, would zealously co-operate with the views of Her Majesty's Government for the attainment of objects so essential to their prosperity, and would frame such a law for the future disposal of public domains and for the security of parties advancing monies on the security thereof, as would induce your Memorialists and others to concur in procuring an advance to the colony of the funds required for the most important public works, and for the promoting a large measure of emigration to Canada.

"That a committee of the three companies, whose designations appear at the head of this Memorial, have conferred with Dr. Rolph, the organ at present in this country of a great body of the colonists, who ardently desire that no time may be lost in adopting measures to promote public works and emigration, and that Dr. Rolph vouches for the concurrence of the sentiments of the parties by whom he has been delegated in the views expressed in this Memorial."

There is of course in these documents no hint of the special project regarding a Beauharnois Canal nursed by the North American Colonial Association of Ireland.

These ideas, however, even thus cautiously advanced, did not commend themselves to Lord Sydenham, who acted with his usual decisiveness. On April 3rd he sent an official reprimand to Rolph, and on April 6th a despatch to Lord John Russell in which he disavowed Rolph's opinions, and remarked, "I have no doubt that on the presentation of these memorials which he transmits, your Lordship will have explained to the societies by whom they had been drawn up the objections to their proposals." His Lordship had, however, done nothing of the kind. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that he was favourably inclined to the scheme, and that Wakefield was the man who had persuaded him. There can be little doubt that Vernon Smith, the Under Secretary, wished it well. On the back of this despatch is a vexed note from the

latter to his chief: "... it is a pity, however, that Lord Sydenham did not foresee as he might have done what Dr. Rolph was likely to do, or at least give you a more distinct notion of what he intended him to do."

But before the despatch arrived, Wakefield had set out for Canada, sailing, as we learn from one of the very few of his letters which still exist, on May 2nd or 3rd, with the knowledge and what may be called the benevolent neutrality of Lord John, who had paved his way by a long despatch written to Lord Sydenham on March 26th.

He began by informing him that he had "entered into personal communication with the memorialists", and was therefore "able to explain more distinctly than the memorial itself has explained, the precise nature of the measures they contemplate", and went on to state their main objects thus: "The memorialists, amongst whom are some persons of considerable wealth and commercial eminence, propose to raise and to advance as a loan large sums of money, to be applied, first, to the improvement of the navigation of the St. Lawrence, and to other similar works; and in the next place, to the introduction of emigrants into Canada and their settlement there. I do not understand them to ask for themselves any participation in the actual execution of the works in question, or any voice in deciding as to the manner in which they should be effected. They would, as I apprehend, stipulate merely that due provision should be made by law for the completion of these undertakings, with the best possible guarantees for the skill and promptitude with which they should be carried on and superintended. As a security for the repayment of their advances, the memorialists look to the land revenue of Canada. For this purpose they propose that there should be some important changes in the law.' He summarizes these changes, which comprise the recommendations of Appendix B, last of which was the all-important one that the land revenue should be pledged by law as security for the loans. He goes on, speaking always for the memorialists, to meet the inevitable objections by representing (1) that the increase in prosperity resulting from the new works will be such that all existing obligations will be met by the fund even *minus* the land revenue, and (2) that the Canadian legis-

lature will be willing to impose some tax in the meanwhile which will bring in a sum equal to the present land revenue should it ever be required. Although he adheres to his usual policy of leaving Sydenham free, he is plainly interested in the project.

“Your Lordship,” he goes on, “will observe that I strictly confine myself to an exposition of what I understand to be the views of the memorialist, without hazarding any opinion of my own as to the practicability or the wisdom of those views. That is a question which you have far better means than any which I possess of estimating aright. If such a project as this could be rendered feasible, and could be actually reduced to practice, there can be no reason to doubt that the command of a large capital for the prompt execution of the public works in Canada would be an advantage of the greatest moment to that province and therefore to this Kingdom. The difficulties which would seem to oppose the execution of this project are at once numerous and formidable; but I have not thought myself at liberty, as certainly I have not felt myself disposed, to discourage on that account the experiment which the memorialists are anxious to make for expediting the development of the great natural resources of Canada. Without attempting to anticipate your Lordship’s judgment as to the practicability of this scheme, still less to fetter in the slightest degree your discretion as to the adoption or rejection of it, I would only commend the subject to your attention. No final measure pledging the land revenue must of course be taken without the previous sanction of Her Majesty’s Government, and probably of Parliament; nor could the Queen be advised to make a surrender of the interests of the Crown contingent on the expiration of the existing civil list, unless some adequate indemnity for that sacrifice were provided. But, subject to these qualifications, your Lordship is at perfect liberty to lend whatever sanction or assistance you may deem it prudent to give to the project of the memorialists, as I understand and have explained it.

“I am informed that the memorialists propose to despatch some person as their agent to communicate with your Lordship on this subject . . . ”

The “person” referred to was of course Wakefield, who,

however, went not as the agent of all the memorialists, but as that of his own company alone. Whether the Canada Company and the British American Land Company began to suspect that the North American Colonial Association of Ireland had fish of its own to fry, or whether they merely distrusted Wakefield, as many people did, at all events they withdrew from the negotiations at this point, though evidently not until the despatch had gone.

Lord Sydenham answered it with his usual promptitude and decision. His reply, dated May 6th, has often been printed and need only be mentioned here. Briefly, he would have none of the project. He had just completed a financial scheme of his own, and he would hear of nothing that seemed to menace it in any particular.

The notes on the back of Lord Sydenham's despatch are interesting. Stephen writes to Vernon Smith: "This is Lord Sydenham's report on a project which Mr. E. G. Wakefield had gone out to superintend. It gives little reason to expect that the projectors will be very successful. Is it necessary to write any answer to this despatch? I should presume not. I annex the former papers. J. S." Vernon Smith writes Lord John: "Might not Mr. J. A. Smith see this? It certainly is a strong opinion for the seductive power of Mr. Wakefield to overcome. R. V. S. June 11th." And the final word is added on June 12th: "This may wait till the Assembly meets, and Mr. Wakefield has detailed his scheme. J. R."

The last stage, so far as the imperial government is concerned, came with a despatch of Lord Sydenham's, written July 26th, which had better be quoted entire.

"Government House,
Kingston, 2nd July, 1841.

My Lord,

I have been happy to avail myself of the presence of Mr. Wakefield in this country to learn the present views and intentions of the association with which he is connected, called the North American Colonial Association of Ireland, by whom the Seignury of Beauharnois has been acquired, and as I had occasion formerly to express my doubts of the course, which it was understood that body intended to pursue, I deem it but

just now to say that so far as I am acquainted with them, the objects which the association at present have in view and the proposed mode of carrying them into effect are likely to be attended with great advantage to the Province. I understand that their efforts will be directed to the improvement of this property by the direct expenditure of capital there, or by advances to the local authorities for the construction of Roads and Communications, and to affording assistance to the Provincial Government in providing means by which some of the great improvements in contemplation may be effected; likewise that it is not their intention to speculate in wild lands, or to act under the banking powers which it is supposed the original charter conferred.

“Mr. Wakefield informs me that a Bill has been prepared for Parliament remodelling the constitution of the Association, and that no objection will be entertained to the abandonment of the very extensive, though at the same time very vague and doubtful powers which were conferred under the old Act of Incorporation, whilst on the other hand the Company wish to obtain clear and defined powers for the purposes I have mentioned. I consider both objects to be very desirable, and I shall be very glad if your Lordship and His Majesty’s Government will afford their assistance towards obtaining for the association such a Legislative revision of their charter as will on the one hand put an end to the unlimited power of holding land in the Colony and to any Banking privileges, and on the other afford the means to the Company of safely improving their estates and of making advances by way of loan to the Provincial Government and to the local authorities for works which may be undertaken by either, or upon mortgage to private parties.”

To this Vernon Smith appends the laconic note (Aug: 17th), “Mr. Wakefield has won,” and Lord John replies sedately (Aug. 18th), “I am glad to find Mr. Wakefield proposes to restrain the powers of this Company within proper limits. Providing (?) that so limited, I approve.” No doubt Wakefield really had “won”, although he had been obliged to curtail his project before the bargain could be struck; he had given up his intention of carrying on a bank, and henceforth we hear nothing more of a first call on the land revenue, per-

haps because that revenue was found to be too small to be allowed to block negotiations. The mountain in this respect had brought forth a mouse. The episode is a curious illustration of the way in which theory often withered up when confronted with local facts.

The Parliamentary sanction requested by Lord Sydenham was unavoidably delayed. The general election of 1841 gave a verdict against Lord Melbourne's Government, and time was consumed before Peel's ministry was formed and ready to meet Parliament, so that it was March 17th, 1842, before Charles Buller was able to bring in a bill, which was passed on June 7th, giving the Association power to loan money for public improvements, but restraining it from acquiring more land or from engaging in banking, unless it were given permission to do so by the Canadian Legislature, which was henceforward to be competent to confer upon it any powers it might choose.

But from the moment of Lord Sydenham's assenting despatch the fortunes of the Association had depended upon Canadian factors. Wakefield had probably* returned to England in July, hoping that all would go smoothly once the governor and presumably a good many other people were on this side. The first session of the Legislature of United Canada opened on June 14th, 1841, and on July 14th Mr. Dunscomb, the member for Beauharnois, moved that the petition of the North American Colonial Association of Ireland praying for leave to make roads and loan money for public works be referred to a select committee. Opposition at once developed, and even on this preliminary step a division had to be taken, although the motion carried. Five days later Mr. Dunscomb, acting for the select committee, brought before the House a bill giving the required permission. It passed its first reading that day, and its second on July 21st. On July 26th, the very day Lord Sydenham sent his despatch, it was brought into committee, only to be hotly debated, and then adjourned from week to week and thus successfully staved off until on August 20th the Governor was obliged to

*In a letter of April 30th he had expressed the intention of doing so.

send down the message containing his proposals with regard to public works. The message explained the loan promised from the Imperial Treasury, enumerated various desirable undertakings with an estimate of their cost, and went on: "There is also one of the works to which, although great importance is justly attached to it, it will, in the opinion of the Governor-General, be just, as well as possible, to affix a condition, by which the annual charge above submitted for the whole may be diminished. The navigation of the St. Lawrence involves the expenditure of nearly one half of the whole sum calculated on. That work is undoubtedly highly desirable, but it scarcely justifies so great an expenditure at present, unless some diminution of the annual charge for interest upon the sum to be raised can be obtained. Nor is such a diminution to be hoped for. Many capitalists in England are interested in the promotion of this work, and especially in seeing the communication between Lake St. Louis and Lake St. Francis established on the *southern* side of the river (through the Seigneurie of Beauharnois, that is). The Governor-General has reason to expect that assistance will be afforded upon this condition, and he would not therefore recommend that this undertaking should be sanctioned, unless, as a condition, the greater part of the capital required for it can be raised at a low rate of interest, not much exceeding that which the Province would have to support for such part of its debt as will be guaranteed in England."

It was a clever attempt to "tack" the Company's scheme to a measure everyone desired. But not even Lord Sydenham's genius for management could ensure its success. When Provincial Secretary Harrison brought down proposals in the same sense they were defeated, and Parliament voted for the unconditional completion of the St. Lawrence system. Many voted against the proposals, it is true, who were not as yet opposed to the south shore line but merely objected to being bound to it. The case was not lost, and on August 30th the House at length passed the Bill empowering the Company to loan money. But the attempt to railroad the scheme through had failed. In this unsettled state the business remained when on September 4th Sydenham met with the accident which resulted in his death. A new government was in power

in England; his death necessitated a new governor in Canada; the work would all have to be done over again.

Accordingly we find Wakefield setting off for Canada once more, this time to make a lengthy stay as the acting factor of the Company,* and timing himself so as to follow hard on the heels of the new governor. Sir Charles Bagot reached Kingston on the tenth of January, 1842, and Wakefield left England on the sixth, and landed in Montreal somewhere about the twentieth.

Before September 26th in this year of 1842 two things had happened: a canal had been begun on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, through the Beauharnois property, and the first Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry had been formed. With the first, Wakefield had attained his great personal object. There were many who said that he had attained it by wholesale corruption (he was rumoured to have disbursed very large sums of money), and that in the South Shore canal the Government had deliberately preferred the worse route to the better. The same men said about the second event that Bagot had called the French to power because he had fallen under the malign influence of Wakefield, and that Wakefield had advised the fatal step because so many patriotic English had fought against his graft that his only hope lay in making a party among the French, by whom also he was surrounded at Beauharnois, and putting power in their hands. The facts about the canal, to attack that question first, can be gleaned from the newspapers, from the printed evidence taken before a Parliamentary Committee which investigated the whole transaction that autumn, and from one or two official despatches.

Wakefield reached Montreal, as we have said, about January 20th, and evidently got in touch at once with the Board of Works. We must remember that the Parliamentary vote of the previous autumn had demanded a canal, and had not definitely rejected the plan of one on the south shore built by money advanced by the Beauharnois Company, as the North American Colonial Association of Ireland was coming

*See his address to the electors of Beauharnois, October, 1842.

to be called, although it had refused to be bound to it. Therefore the matter now rested with the Executive. We must also remember that Wakefield, as a former subordinate of Lord Durham's, had plenty of acquaintances in Canada and would have no difficulty in approaching the right people.† In particular Mr. Dominick Daly, in 1842 Provincial Secretary for Canada East, had been a member of Lord Durham's Special Council, and seems to have become a personal friend of Wakefield. And it was he, according to evidence given before the select committee, who first broached the project with the Board of Works. At all events, on February 15th, less than a month after Wakefield's landing, Mr. Killaly, Chairman of the Board of Works, announced that as regards "the continuation of the St. Lawrence Canal below Coteau du Lac, the survey will be commenced as soon as weather permits, and work probably commenced this season." In a letter written the month following to the *Colonial Gazette*, Wakefield remarked that the necessity of completing the canal was the one point on which Sir Charles Bagot had been decided, adding, "The Board of Works at least is full of activity." During the late winter and early spring months the survey was hastily completed. On June 13th the Committee of the Executive Council recommended the Board of Works to proceed with the canal on a line through the Beauharnois property; on June 14th £50,000 was advanced by the City Bank, acting through Dunscomb, member for Beauharnois and a director of the bank, and on the same day Sir Charles Bagot announced to the Montreal Board of Trade the decision which had been made. Ground was actually broken on July 20th. On July 19th Bagot addressed to Lord Stanley an official despatch defending the decision, and also a private letter in which he explained in direct language the interested sources from which sprang some of the opposition, as, for instance, the seigneurs on the north shore who had hoped to see their own property

†Before he sailed in January he had written the Colonial Office asking for leave to use a letter which Lord Durham had filed with his report in 1839 for the purpose of acknowledging Wakefield's value to his mission, in his authorized, though unofficial, position. Obviously he was collecting credentials.

improved, and a customs officer at Coteau du Lac, who was unwilling to see the office removed to the south shore. A curious fact is that the arguments in this letter are identical even to the sub-headings with those of an article which appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* of June 25th.

Wakefield had carried his point. If he had used corrupt means he had covered his tracks well. In all the angry investigation which ensued in October, the closest questioning failed to disclose him at work. Harrison, Provincial Secretary for Canada West, questioned as to his reason for hastening the commencement of the canal, gave a well-sounding answer about the need of providing work for destitute emigrants. Dunscomb, questioned regarding the loan, refused to admit that in all the negotiations the particular shore which the canal should follow had never been specified. Dunn, the Receiver-General, confronted with the direct question, "Had you any communication, verbally or otherwise, on the subject of the Beauharnois Canal or the loan from the City Bank, with Mr. E. G. Wakefield?" answered, "I never had any conversation with him on the subject, to the best of my recollection." When Killaly was asked the same question he replied that he had written to Mr. E. G. Wakefield "as an influential person residing in Beauharnois," and through his help had obtained the relinquishments of about two hundred persons through whose land the canal would pass. All very innocent. Yet no one doubted at the time, and we need not doubt to-day, that in lending the money the City Bank was merely an agent for the Beauharnois Company, and that throughout the negotiations, whatever hand might be seen, the voice was the voice of Wakefield. How far corrupt means were used, and whether the south shore line was really the wrong one, are different questions, not easy to answer at the present day. Many said that the survey, conducted so hastily at an unfavourable season, was only a pretence, and that the result had been a foregone conclusion from the beginning. The protest sounds reasonable. But as the select committee failed to come to any verdict, the historian, scanning after many years the close pages of contradictory expert evidence which baffled contemporaries, can hardly hope to find one.

Leaving this matter, then, with the certainty that Wake-

field used every legitimate means to forward his Company's interest, but without proof that he went beyond legitimate means, we turn our attention to the political history of Canada during the months January-September, 1842. For Wakefield, as his editor, Mr. James Collier, has said, was born and reared a public soul. Even his intrigues were never for his own private gain, but always for advantage to some one of his projects, and the public affairs of the country where he dwelt were certain to possess his mind. Half-way through September of that year Sir Charles Bagot appointed to office a Council in which the majority vote would go against the old official party, and which, since it contained four of the French leaders, could command the French vote and therefore the majority in the Legislature. It was a momentous step, which at once raised the French from their abasement as conquered rebels, and accepted the principle of responsible government. The question we have to consider is whether Wakefield influenced Bagot in taking it. If he did, he did something of historical importance, and we need not trouble ourselves much about the considerations which moved him.

There can be no doubt that he approved of what was done, for he published many articles applauding it. Nor is there any doubt that he tried to further the formation of the ministry. We know that he wrote to Mr. J. J. Girouard (he published the letter himself in 1844) urging the French to consent to take office in a coalition with the English Reformers. He certainly thought he had furthered it, for, to adduce only one bit of proof, in his pamphlet on the Government of Sir Charles Metcalfe he used the words, "*It is here necessary for me to state, that having taken a very active part in promoting that change under Sir Charles Bagot . . .*" Such a belief was at the time practically universal in Canada. The press teems with it, pitched in all keys, from the abusive utterances of *The Church*, quoted by the Kingston Chronicle, Nov. 2, which says that "this felon has exercised a mysterious influence in our affairs," and inquires whether Her Majesty's Representative is "to allow his Government to be supported by, and in turn to support, a convicted felon," to the dignified inquiry contained on Oct. 18, 1843, in the *Montreal Gazette*, which had been entirely friendly to Wakefield during the canal affair, but

which now asked drily whether Mr. Wakefield was intending to unmake the ministry which he had made.*

All this evidence has a good deal of weight, especially as every fact we have been able to discover leads in the same direction, and goes to strengthen the belief that Wakefield had obtained influence with Bagot and had first advised and then planned the change of government.

It has always been one of the puzzles of history that a man like Bagot, whose whole life offers no further proof that he possessed first-class political powers, and who had had no experience as an administrator, should have been the solitary official to see to the heart of the Canadian problem and take the one risky step that led to its solution. The customary explanation is that he did not see to its heart, but that he followed the path of least resistance and yielded to the clamour of the Reformers. It is usual to add that he liked peace and comfort. He was certainly not laying up peace and comfort and preferment for his future life when he displeased his official superiors, as by this step he did, and as he knew he was doing. The explanation is not convincing. A more recent and more intelligent view, founded mainly upon the ability made evident in the great despatch of September 26th which announced the change of policy, has spoken of Bagot as a "great opportunist," who first found his powers under stress of the emergency. But such a sudden outburst of capacity seems doubtful. Allowing all possible weight to the pressure of the Canadian statesmen, one can yet believe that some one helped Bagot to take the clear view of the whole situation we find expressed in the despatch, and to act accordingly. His secretary, Murdock, until he went home at the end of July was one who helped. After that, who more likely to do so than the man who had already shown his powers in the contribu-

*The malignity of his opponents has at times its ludicrous aspect. Thus an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "Canada under Four Successive Generations," presents an ingenious theory based on the supposition that Durham, while Ambassador at St. Petersburg, had entered into a plot to betray the British Empire to the Czar. The Durham Report and the Beauharnois Canal appear in this theory as calculated steps leading up to the great calamity, the Baldwin-Lafontaine Ministry, which will of course fulfil the terms of the bargain by disrupting the Empire.

tion he had admittedly made to the lucid exposition of the great Report? It is impossible to make a hero of Wakefield. Even if one leaves out of account his early errors, the image has feet of clay. But he had one of the greatest political minds of his time, he was credited by many people with the actual authorship of the Report, he had founded the flourishing colonies of South Australia and New Zealand; even the unwilling official class were beginning to regard him as an authority upon colonial questions. What more natural than that Sir Charles Bagot should respect his opinions? It is extremely likely that Murdock had weighed them carefully before he went home.

If we look for proof, the first thing we discover is that Wakefield left no one in doubt as to what his opinions were. Quite the most valuable material we possess for the present purpose is contained in a series of articles he wrote from Canada for publication in the *Colonial Gazette*. Beginning on January 26th, he wrote once a month, giving his views on Canadian affairs both political and economic. The letters show him at his best, with none of the special pleading which sometimes damages his work. It is worth while to examine them rather minutely, for from them one may be able to deduce what is going on behind the scenes.

From the very first he espouses the cause of the French-Canadians. One may almost say that he does so before the very first, for on October 13th, 1841, while still in England, he had written, in the course of an article which anticipates with singular prescience the judgment of history upon Lord Sydenham, "... For example, ... he has done nothing whatever in the shape of securities for equal justice for the oppressed and persecuted Canadians of French origin. He could not do everything at once, and his successor alone will be blamed if that should remain undone ..." In the first letter from Canada he returns to the charge. The country is tranquil, he says, in the sense that there is no danger of revolt, but there is no moral tranquility because the French are not loyal, and cannot be, considering the grievances under which they labour. There follows a remarkable paragraph, pointing out as shrewdly as any of Lord Sydenham's as yet unpublished despatches the chaos that was the Canadian Parliament. Here

is his key-note,—French disabilities and an unsatisfactory Parliament.

Letters II, III, and IV are mainly occupied with discussions of Peel's Canadian Corn Law and its reception in Canada, with faint complainings of Bagot's inactivity. The fifth letter, written on May 28th, a week after Bagot had reached Montreal on his first visit, mentions various appointments that are likely to be made. The intimations are most discreetly given; "it is said" that Mr. Hincks is to be Inspector-General; "rumour also says" that a "Family Compact man" is to be made Solicitor-General of Upper Canada; "it is inferred" from the project of filling up the Chief-Justiceship of Lower Canada that Sir Charles Bagot has resolved not to proclaim Lord Sydenham's Anglifying Ordinances; "rumour says" that M. Valliere de St. Réal is to be the new Chief Justice. It all sounds as if he were merely repeating current gossip—until you read an editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* of August 10th (after the paper containing the letter had reached Canada) which inquires how "some weeks before such rumours were current in Montreal this ubiquitous writer was enabled to prognosticate with all the confidence of assurance" the above-mentioned appointments. Then you realize that in some way, direct or indirect, Wakefield has been in touch with Bagot. He approves all the appointments, one may notice, except that of the "Family Compact man," which he says is as if the Queen were to send for "Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell . . . and tell them to jumble themselves with a lot of their respective friends into an efficient Administration. The putting together into power of such antagonistic materials can never be of service to government or country." There is nothing equivocal here.

We may regard it as certain, then, that by the end of May Wakefield had access to Bagot and was sufficiently in his confidence to know the appointments he was meditating. Whether or not he expressed his own opinion at this time, the timid policy was at all events tried. The next letter, written June 13th, while Bagot was still in Montreal, mentions that all the rumoured appointments have been made, and a further "jumbling" attempted in the offer of the Solicitor-Generalship of Lower Canada to M. Cherrier, who has, however, declined.

A paragraph follows which suggests that Wakefield definitely knew the reason for the Governor's temporizing measures.

"This advantage (the confidence of the Imperial Government) Lord Sydenham possessed in a high degree, and it was the main cause of the success of his administration of affairs here. He could do as he pleased: and in whatever he did he was sure to be backed by Lord John Russell." Is Sir Charles Bagot in a less secure position? "If it is so, so surely will Sir Charles Bagot 'break down', notwithstanding his many obvious good qualities. Mark my words; have I not almost a right to give myself the airs of a prophet in speaking of Canadian affairs?"

Note especially the tone of assurance in the last sentence, a tone very unusual with Wakefield. He must have felt quite secure in the governor's confidence. What he hints here about Bagot's uneasy relations with Lord Stanley he states in plain language in 1844, when he says that he has positive knowledge that Stanley's displeasure over the change of ministry aggravated Bagot's illness so that it became fatal.

The next letter, written July 10th, while the governor was in Quebec, was meant to prepare the public mind in England for a desperate stroke, and perhaps to dispel the last mist of indecision from His Excellency's mind. "... without an amnesty (to the French), there is not, I firmly believe, the least chance of harmony between the Executive and the Assembly for the coming session. So absolutely necessary is it for Lord Sydenham's successor to have this healing measure, this powerful means of conciliation and peace, at his disposal, that most people concluded he had not left England without permission to use it. Everything now indicates that his hands are tied fast with respect to the power of pardoning and forgetting. If it be so, he had better resign, for his own sake, before the meeting of the Parliament. That event cannot be postponed beyond the middle of September."

The final letter was written on August 12th, after Bagot had again visited Montreal, and, presumably, had had more conversations with Wakefield. The change of tone is unmistakable. There is no further criticism or guesswork. He writes with full clear confidence, after the manner of an accredited envoy whose business is to win a favourable hearing for the

affairs of his principal. Evidently the understanding between the pair is now complete. He knows that the governor has resolved to follow the course he has been advising, and he sets himself to a supreme effort of advocacy.

The letter is one of the ablest Wakefield ever wrote. It begins with a masterly analysis of the political situation, and shows that if the Governor faces Parliament with his present Council a vote of want of confidence is certain. Supposing it passed, the Governor has two possible courses, (1) to disregard the vote and govern by a minority, thus heading straight for disaster, or (2) to appoint a Council which can command a majority. If he decides for the latter course, whom shall he appoint? By an analysis of the parties in the House, and an exhaustive consideration of all possible combinations, Wakefield reaches the conclusion that the only way to follow the second course is to choose some men from the French leaders and some from the English Reformers, and trust them to work together. The letter is much too long to be quoted entire, but its style and manner are so material to our argument that we must make some excerpts:

“ . . . What that mischief might be, will appear from a brief account of the state of parties in the Assembly and in the country.

“In the United Province there are four great parties, which may be described as follows:

First. Lower Canada French; who have been described by Lord Durham (too unfavourably, I now think, and with far too little regard to their deep interest in the British connection) whom their rebellion has crushed, upon whom the Union was forced, and who, though they compose a full half of the population of the whole province, are excluded from all share in the government of their country.

Second. Lower Canada British; on whom the rebellion conferred the character of a dominant race, and according to whose ideas the Lower Province was governed during Lord Sydenham's time.

Third. Upper Canada Tories; who ruled their own province before the Union, who *made* their rebellion, whose power Lord Sydenham destroyed by breaking up the party, and who long to recover their old position as a minority ruling

in flat opposition to the wishes of the great majority. The chiefs of this party are known as the Family Compact.

Fourth. Upper Canada Reformers; consisting of all whom the Family Compact used regularly to exclude from influence in the government of their country, and forming the great majority.

I leave out of account a goodly number in both divisions of the province who have no marked political opinions, and who would be apt to go with the strongest party, of whatever colour it might be.

The representatives of the four political parties, together with a certain number of loose fish who hardly disguise that their sole object is personal aggrandizement, and who would go with the strongest, compose the Assembly in the following proportions or thereabouts: Lower Canada (including some members of English origin who have been sent to Parliament by French constituencies), rather more than two-eighths; Lower Canada British, rather less than one-eighth; Upper Canada Reformers, three-eighths; Loose Fish, one-eighth.

The combination of parties forming the majority which carried Lord Sydenham through the first session of the United Parliament, consisted of all the Lower Canada British, and all the Upper Canada Reformers except two or three who sided with the French, and all the Loose Fish; making about five-eighths of the House. The minority, consisting of all the Lower Canada French and all the Upper Canada Tories, was in constant opposition to Lord Sydenham's Government; and his majority was so little reliable that it may be said he dashed through the session in spite of several defeats, by dint of driving the coach himself, and hard flogging, not to mention the £1,500,000 to be guaranteed by England, and the foolish fear entertained by the Upper Canada Reformers of getting an out-and-out Tory Government here in consequence of the general election then taking place in England.

Lord Sydenham's Executive Council was composed of all sorts of men, every one of whom gave up more or less of his own opinions in order to adopt Lord Sydenham's; and among whom there was no popular leader of any party, after Mr. Robert Baldwin, the leader till then of the Upper Canada Reformers, resigned and went into opposition along with the

French. It is quite certain, therefore, that Lord Sydenham's Government would not have got through another session in harmony with the Assembly. I have no doubt that if he had lived and been compelled to remain, he would have changed his policy and his Council so as to command a majority in the Assembly.

" . . . while, therefore, Sir Charles Bagot's Council is rather more heterogeneous than Lord Sydenham's, it is very considerably less qualified to command a majority in the Assembly. And there is this yet more important difference between the two cases—that while Lord Sydenham's Parliamentary experience enabled him to be his own Prime Minister, and while Lord John Russell's entire confidence in him gave him vast individual influence as the representative of the Crown, Sir Charles Bagot has had no practice in party politics, and is supposed (the supposition being quite as bad as the fact) to be very far from free to do just what in his judgment would suit every exigency as it occurred, and still further from being sure of unhesitating and public approval at home, let him do what he might.

In only one respect is Sir Charles Bagot's position better than Lord Sydenham's. The latter, as the vigorous promoter of the Union, and partisan of the British in Lower Canada, would have found it very difficult, not to say impossible, to come to any terms with the French; who, I believe, would gladly come to terms with Sir Charles Bagot, as one unconnected with the not very pure work of carrying the Union by hook or by crook—as the first Governor who has made a French Canadian (the eminent M. Vallières de St. Réal) Chief Justice of Montreal—as an organ of the Imperial power who is supposed to disapprove in his heart of the exclusion of the French from all share in the government of their country.

The parties in the Assembly who, it is believed, will join in a vote of want of confidence in the present Government, are all of the Upper Canada Tories, led by Sir Allan McNab; all the French, led by Mr. Lafontaine; a good many of the Upper Canada Reformers, who object to the balancing plan of putting an extreme Tory into the Council at the same time with an extreme Reformer, and to whom the real and weighty grievances of the French will be explained this session by English

representatives of the French party, who have got into Parliament during the recess—these being led by Mr. Robert Baldwin; some of the Loose Fish, whom Sir Charles Bagot cannot bring himself to buy with a place; and even some of the Lower Canada British, led by Mr. Moffatt, who call the most unexceptionable appointment of M. Vallières a subjection of the Province to French domination, and who, because they can no longer have their own will upon the French, would be glad to see the Governor-General in such a mess as might by chance bring him under their influence. These would form a large majority, perhaps nearly six-eighths, of the Assembly.

* * * * *

“It is understood by everybody here whose opinions deserve any attention, that the French Canadians have got what may be termed the casting-vote in the representation of United Canada. For this they should thank God; for it is by this alone that, after the rebellion, they could have been spared from extermination by the rude hands of the British party. It shows that the Union, if worked in the spirit of justice, is calculated to protect the French from the evils of a perpetual warfare with the British in Lower Canada. Under the Union, the French cannot *be* the majority, but they can *give* the majority to any other considerable party. This, their balancing-power, is felt and acknowledged by all who really know much about Canada politics. Influenced by a knowledge of this important power in the French, the Upper Canada Tory leaders, among whom there are some men of great political experience and ability, have ever since the middle of last session, contemplated a union between their party and the French. The conditions of the bargain would be very simple. “Let us unite,” say the Upper Canada Tories, “so as to form a majority in the Assembly; and then let us divide the Government of Canada between us, you taking the East and we the West.”

* * * * *

This plan (that of calling the French to power) might be pursued *moderately*; i.e., by admitting the French, not, as in the case before supposed, to the whole power of Government in Lower Canada, but to a fair share. . . . The party most interested in such a combination are the now excluded French. I

firmly believe that they would come into it, . . . I think that they would even be reasonable in their demands, not asking for more than might be properly granted, but provided always that the concessions were sufficient to prove the Governor-General in earnest. They have been so often taken in that they may be pardoned for being very suspicious. In dealing with them Sir Charles Bagot's goodness of heart and total want of guile would be very serviceable to him.

* * * * *

"Let us recapitulate. The present state of things cannot last over another month. The Assembly is sure to condemn the present Executive. It would be madness in the Governor-General to defy the Assembly. In order to get a majority in the Assembly to go along with him, Sir Charles Bagot must needs adopt a policy and form a Council different from those of his predecessor: Two schemes present themselves to his choice. The one would be the greatest possible change from what now is; the other but a partial change. The one would ere long produce an extensive and the most formidable disaffection; the other is a change recommended by justice, not likely to revolt the moderate of any party, and calculated to attach the vast majority to the Imperial connexion.

"My predilection for the latter course is here avowed. I firmly believe that it is the only one by which Sir Robert Peel's Governor of United Canada can escape severe troubles ending in conspicuous failure. His decision will have been made about a month hence, and before this will have returned to Canada printed in your columns."

Parliament, as we have said, met on September 8. Wakefield was in Kingston on the opening day, ostensibly, and to some extent actually, on his own affairs, for the Beauharnois Company was certain to draw fire, but also, one imagines, with an eye to public events as well. On September 13 the Governor made an offer to Mr. Lafontaine. It was refused. The House began to debate a motion of want of confidence, and nothing was in sight but confusion and disaster. Next day Sir Charles Bagot took the very unusual step—so unusual as to draw comment from all quarters—of causing his letter to Mr. Lafontaine to be read in the House, that all might see exactly what his offer had been. He (or some other person)

guessed that the French party as a whole had for some reason been kept in ignorance of its real terms, and calculated that this publicity would force the hand of their leader. The calculation was correct. Mr. Lafontaine at once began to negotiate, and after one or two minor concessions had been made to save his face, accepted office in September.

Now let the reader remember that when Wakefield feared the Durham Report would never see Parliament, he took the highly irregular step of publishing it in the *Times* before ever it had been submitted to the Government. Let him remember that when he doubted the sincerity of Poulett Thomson he published his professions of Canadian policy (and in doing so came perilously near the line of betraying a confidential conversation), so that Thomson might be forced to stand by them. And then let him ask himself who planned that daring but successful stroke by which Lafontaine was forced into office. The move has Wakefield written large all over it. Placed alongside his own later claims, the universal opinion of the day, and the conclusions one is obliged to draw from studying the articles in the *Colonial Gazette*, it goes a long way towards crystallizing a belief that he really was giving advice to the Governor and Mr. Draper.

There is one more piece of evidence, which would weigh more heavily if the documents could be reproduced here in their entirety. On September 26, Sir Charles Bagot addressed to Lord Stanley the despatch already once mentioned. The following excerpts may give some idea of its quality:

" . . . It was also necessary for me to visit the Lower Province in order to judge for myself of the disposition of the French Canadians, which I took the first opportunity of doing.

"Before describing to your Lordship the result of my experience thus obtained, it may be necessary for me to revert to the circumstances of the two Provinces at the time when Lord Sydenham assumed the reins of Government, and to trace briefly the subsequent course of events.

"On Lord Sydenham's arrival, he found the Lower Province deprived of a Constitution—the Legislative functions of the Government being administered by a special Council consisting of a small number of members, nominated by the Crown. The people—at least a large portion of those of

French origin—prostrate under the effects of the Rebellion—overawed by the power of Great Britain—and excluded from all share in the Government—had resigned themselves to a sullen and reluctant submission, or to a perverse, but passive, resistance to the Government.

“This temper was not improved by the passing of the Act of Union. In this measure, heedless of the generosity of the Imperial Government in overlooking their recent disaffection, and giving them a free and popular Constitution, such as it had not previously accorded to any of the most loyal, of the other British dependencies, they apprehended a new instrument of subjection, and accordingly prepared to resist it. Lord Sydenham found them in this disposition, and despairing from its early manifestations of the possibility of overcoming or appeasing it, before the periods at which it would be necessary to put in force the Act of Union, he determined upon evincing his indifference to it, and upon taking steps to carry out his views in spite of the opposition of the French party. In pursuance of this object, he took advantage of the existence of the Special Council to pass several Ordinances which he deemed necessary to the future welfare of the Province, but which, containing enactments repugnant to the past habits and prejudices of the population, he expected would be violently opposed in the United Parliament, if deferred for the decision of that body. This further exasperated the French Canadians, and as Lord Sydenham, after one unsuccessful attempt, abandoned all further efforts at conciliation, they have from that time until my arrival, uniformly declared and evinced their hostility to the Union, as a measure forced upon them, . . . and have maintained a consistent, united, and uncompromising opposition to the Government which was concerned in carrying it into execution. I regret to add that a strong personal animosity to Lord Sydenham, into the causes of which it is unnecessary to inquire, has greatly tended to increase this feeling.

“In Upper Canada, the folly and wickedness of the parties engaged in the revolt of 1837 had aroused a spirit of indignation and loyalty in the mass of the population. . . . A fierce struggle, however, was going on between the dominant party in the Government (which, though numerically very

small, had for years maintained an exclusive sway in the Executive) and the large majority of the Inhabitants. That party, whose strength depended upon the exclusion of the popular voice, and upon the arbitrary exercise of the Imperial authority under their direction, was naturally very averse to a Union of the Provinces, which in its principle broke up the exclusive character of their system, and in its provisions admitted to the fullest extent the representative form of government. Lord Sydenham, therefore, found it necessary to break the opposition of this party, which, as it had at any time but a very precarious hold upon public opinion, he soon effected; and by this policy succeeded in gaining the good will and support of that portion of the population which, under the name of Reformers, included those who on principle favoured a popular system of Government, and those who with more moderate views joined in opposing the exclusive system which had hitherto prevailed. By the aid of this party he carried through the Legislative Resolutions approving and adopting the Union, which he had already obtained, without difficulty, from the Special Council of Lower Canada by a Proclamation of the Governor.

“When this took place, it became necessary to form a new Government to administer the affairs of the United Province, and to convoke a House of Assembly in compliance with the provisions of the Act of Union. Lord Sydenham, I have stated, found the Government of the Lower Province entirely in the hands of the British party (the French Canadians having for many years been excluded from it) and that of the Upper Province in the hands of the party above described. The French Canadians had placed it out of his power to invite them to a share in his Government, and their avowed opposition to the Union rendered such a course undesirable. In constituting, therefore, his new Executive Council, he selected such members of the former Government in Lower Canada as he thought fit, and detached from the governing party in the Upper Province some of the ablest of the body, who were willing after the passing of the Union to forego their objections to the measure, and to assist in carrying out its provisions; and these, with two or three new members, completed his Council, which might be said to represent the Reformer

or popular party of Upper Canada, and the moderate Conservatives of both Provinces."

* * * * *

"Out of the whole body (of the Assembly) the Government obtained a small, but inconsistent and uncertain, majority. At the beginning of the Session, it is true, the members generally supported the Government in opposition to the extreme parties; but this aid was soon withdrawn. Lord Sydenham, feeling that it would be necessary to strengthen the position of the Executive in the House, and that if he could conciliate the French, the Government would be able to withstand all other opposition, endeavoured to adopt that course, but without success. Members of that party who accepted office from him, were invariably rejected from their seats, when they sought to be re-elected; and an overture, made to the party through Mr. Lafontaine, was abruptly broken off. As the Session advanced, the supporters of the Government, thus weakened, were so reduced in number, that, with all their exertions, some of the most important ministerial measures were passed by a bare majority, and in one or two cases by the casting vote of the Speaker, and in this posture the affairs of the Session closed.

* * * * *

"I felt satisfied that the distrust and ill will which had been engendered among the French Canadians by their long exclusion from a share in the administration of public affairs, would be dispelled by such a measure (calling them to the Council): that they would receive it as a boon with gratitude, and would give in exchange for it their support in the Legislature, and their assistance throughout the Lower Province in carrying out the main provisions of the Union. Their leaders had already perceived that their opposition to the Union was fruitless, and that a continuance of it would only deprive them of the advantages of the Act, and expose them to many evils consequent upon their resistance. Some of them were therefore ready to abandon their opposition, and to meet any reasonable overture on my part. The opportunity once lost would not, I was convinced, be soon, if ever, recovered. I felt equally confident that this policy would meet with the support of the mass of British Reformers and moderate men

of all parties in the Legislature and the Province; and that, if I succeeded in my attempt, I should have taken the first great step to consolidate the Union, to restore content to the Lower Provinces, without disturbing the tranquillity of the Upper, and to lay the foundation of the permanent prosperity of Canada.

"I knew, however, that I could not hope to succeed with the French Canadians as a race, and my object was to deal with them as such, and not as a mere party in the House, unless I did secure the services of men who possess their confidence, and who would bring to my assistance, not only their own talents and some votes in the House of Assembly, but the good will and attachment of their race, and that I could not obtain such services unless I was willing to place the individuals in a position in my Council which would prevent them from feeling themselves a hopeless minority against a suspicious and adverse majority, unless, in fact, I admitted them on liberal and generous terms."

* * * * *

" . . . The High Conservative party, I ascertained, had made overtures to the French Canadians, and the extreme opponents of the Government, and were prepared to combine with them in order to overthrow my Executive Council, heedless of the inconsistency of such a course, and the difficulties in which its success would have placed me."

Of this despatch it has been said that it is a work of genius if a despatch can ever deserve that name. The world hardly expected genius from Sir Charles Bagot. But in Canada at that time there *was* a genius, and as one reads the despatch, admiring its breadth, its amazing lucidity, the ease and certainty with which many tributary rills are drawn into the main stream of the argument, one is arrested by the recollection that these are the very attributes by which one recognizes Wakefield's work, even unsigned. As one dwells on the idea; one is surprised to find also how much matter is common to the two documents. In each of the series of excerpts printed above is found (a) a statement of Sydenham's personal unpopularity with the French, (b) one of Bagot's popularity, lightly stressed in the second series, as good taste required, but still there, (c) a very similar account of the com-

position of Sydenham's majority in the House, and of the difficulty with which he got through the Session, (d) a statement of the likelihood of a coalition, hostile to the Government, being formed between the French and the High Tories, (e) a confident expectation that the French would accept the measure of power offered them, without grasping at the whole. It is true that the styles of the two documents are superficially dissimilar. One is a journalistic letter, the other a state document; each is written in the style that fits it. But the manner of the two, if that word may be used to designate such broad categories as modes of thought, clearness of statement, and orderly arrangement, is identical. I may be pardoned for repeating once more the phrase used above, "the ease and certainty with which many tributary rills are drawn into the main stream of the argument." It applies equally to both documents. The range and quality of the writer's mind expresses itself in a fundamental matter like this, and if two documents show the same characteristic they are likely to be written by the same man. One notes also even such points of style, not easily concealed, as the brief introductory statement which focusses attention on a mass of details to follow—a journalist's device of which one example is found in each of our series of excerpts: (1) "What that mischief might be, will appear from a brief account of the state of parties in the Assembly and in the country." and (2) "Before describing to your Lordship the result of my experience thus obtained, it will be necessary for me to revert to the circumstances of the two Provinces at the time when Lord Sydenham assumed the reins of Government, and to trace briefly the subsequent course of events." The argument is closely knit together by the use of words of reference, such as "that mischief" in (1), and "thus" in (2). In short a prolonged analysis affords reason for a strong belief that the state document was composed at least partially by the same man who wrote in the *Colonial Gazette*. I have myself a pleasant if freakish vision of a back room somewhere in Alwington House where Wakefield and Bagot's secretary laboured to present the new move in the most seductive light (the word is Mr. Vernon Smith's) to Lord Stanley.


If we are right in our tracing of the part he played in 1842, we can understand why, although evidently anxious to have some of the credit, he never gave any details of or any proof of his share in the formation of the ministry. His was an entirely extra-constitutional rôle, which with the constitutionally-minded would have reflected discredit on him, and, what was of more consequence, on the Governor. The only claim he could advance in public was that he had possessed influence with the French and had persuaded them to take up office, some proof of which claim he did offer in the shape of the letter to Mr. Girouard, which we have already mentioned. I do not believe that this claim is entitled to much credence.* But I do believe that although Responsible Government was likely to come sooner or later without his help, or indeed in spite of it, as events under Sir Charles Metcalfe prove, yet in the actual drama of 1842 his figure is an important one. He acquired over Sir Charles Bagot the kind of influence which a great mind can always exercise upon an able though lesser one. He threw all his weight on the side of the Reformers and the cry for Responsible Government. He planned the stroke that pushed the Coalition into office. And he wrote, or helped to write, the despatch which announced the victory.

URSILLA N. MACDONNELL.

*Wakefield had already tried under Lord Durham to persuade the French to give up a cherished attitude for a new one, and had failed. All the evidence on this point is carefully examined in *Attainment of Canadian Self-Government* by F. Bradshaw. In 1839 Lafontaine had published a letter touching those early negotiations which shows plainly the distrust Wakefield had inspired in his cautious, sagacious mind.

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